

To: Appropriations Committee; Subcommittee – Conservation & Development
From: Amy Wynn, Executive Director, Northwest Connecticut Arts Council
Date: February 24, 2011
Re: Testimony on the Commission on Culture & Tourism and the State Budget

Mr. Co-Chairmen and members of the committee,

My name is Amy Wynn and I am the Executive Director of the Northwest Connecticut Arts Council, serving 24 towns, and I am also on the board of the Connecticut Arts Alliance. I am here before you today to urge you **not** to support the current proposed budget cuts in Culture & Tourism grant programs and to also advocate that you **not make any changes in the status of the agency** that would jeopardize its eligibility to receive National Endowment Matching funds.

We recognize the enormous challenge with finding solutions to this crisis. However, State government itself recognizes the enormous contribution the creative industries have made. We applaud the allocation of \$15 million for tourism marketing; however, the cultural attractions **that drive tourism** also must have sustained support. While it could be argued that his budget allocates more for culture and tourism combined, in essence the arts suffer a loss.

Both the Basic Cultural Resources grants and the Culture, Tourism and Arts grants are cut by 21% in the proposed budget. These cuts come on top of the 49% and the 38% cuts in the two main agency granting programs sustained in FY10 and FY11. Cutting grants to arts organizations by more than 60% from FY09 levels is too severe and will backfire economically on the state.

The Commission on Culture and Tourism provides important operating support to roughly 150 nonprofit businesses in the creative industry sector. General operating support is crucial to keeping the doors of these businesses open, employing people, and continuing to make a positive economic impact in every corner of the state.

These proposed cuts to the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism budget are likely to cause irreparable damage to cultural institutions state-wide. **The allotment CCT receives annually is such a miniscule portion of the state budget**; however, this small allotment goes a long way and making the proposed 21% cut on top off previous years' cuts would leave funds at a detrimental level for organizations. What will it be like if your towns no longer have a community theatre, a local art association, cultural programming for your schools and libraries, or summer music festivals?

We understand that the budget challenges require that everyone to bear a portion of the hardship, but the cultural community has already been severely cut and **reductions for the arts, the budget for which is literally a dust speck in the financial scheme, are not going to solve the crisis in any meaningful way.**

Please help the cultural community that enriches our state survive. Please do not approve further cuts in the Commission on Culture & Tourism's grant program budget.

Sincerely,

Amy Wynn, Executive Director
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Serving 24-towns in Northwest Connecticut